

him for the romantic stupidity of his conduct, and rallied him, some time, in his madness in presuming that Damon, by his return, would prove as great a fool as himself; 'My Lord,' said Pythias, with a firm voice and noble aspect, 'I would it were possible that I might suffer a thousand deaths, rather than my friend should fail in any article of his honour. He cannot fail therein, my Lord, I am as confident of his virtue as I am of my own existence. But, I pray, I beseech the Gods to preserve the life and integrity of my Damon together. Oppose him, ye winds! prevent the eagerness and impatience of his honourable endeavours! and suffer him not to arrive till, by my death, I have redeemed a life, a thousand times of more consequence, more estimation, than my own: more estimable to his lovely wife, to his precious little innocents, to his friends, to his country. O, leave me not to die the worst of deaths in my Damon?'

Dionysius was confounded and awed by the dignity of these sentiments, and by the manner (still more sentimental) in which they were uttered; he felt his heart struck by a slight sense of invading truth, but it served rather to perplex than undeceive him. He hesitated, he would have spoken, but he looked down, and retired in silence.

The

The fatal day arrived. Pythias went forth, and walked, amidst the guard, with a serious but satisfied air, to the place of execution.

Dionysius was already there. He stood on a moving throne, that was fixed on six white horses, and sat pensive and to the demeanour of the prisoner.

Pythias came. He vaulted lightly on the scaffold; and beholding for some time the apparatus of his death, he turned with a calm countenance, and addressed the assembly.

'My prayers are heard,' he cried, 'the gods are propitious! you know, my friends, that the winds have been contrary to my day. Damon could not come, he cannot conquer impossibilities; he will be here to-morrow, and the blood which he will shed to-day, shall have ransomed the blood of my friend. O, could I erase from your minds every doubt, every mean suspicion, every shadow of honour of the man for whom I am to suffer, I should go to my death with a smile. I would to my bridal. Be it sufficient for the mean time, that my friend will be acquitted, noble, that his truth is unimpeached, that he will speedily approve it, that he will be on his way, hurrying on, accusing the adverse elements, and the Gods, for their haste to prevent his speed: execute your office.'